

Teaching Boys Brigade Knowledge (BBK) can be daunting. There are many ways to teach BBK, all of which have their strengths and weaknesses. In this article I will attempt to give you some practical and useful ways to teach BBK, including a new resource which I have created.

Before we go into the specifics of teaching BBK, let's first discuss some fundamentals of teaching. When teaching any subject, there are some certain things to be aware of. These things apply not only to teaching BBK but can also apply to drill and other things you might be teaching on a Boys Brigade night.

Firstly, **Engagement**. It is critical that you get the attention of your students. If they aren't looking at you or something else is more interesting, they won't listen to you. *You* have to be the most interesting thing in that room. If that means removing other things in the room, remove them. In addition to clearing the space you are in; you also need to look at yourself. Am I presenting myself as someone who kids would want to listen to? How you are dressed plays a part of this. Are you dressed as someone wearing a spanking uniform, or in a baggy hoodie and shorts? You don't want to appear intimidating, or so casual no one will take you seriously. This is something you will have to work out based on your particular audience. If the kids don't respect you, maybe try dressing smarter, giving you a look of authority. If they are don't know you or are shy, maybe try dressing a bit more casual so you feel more approachable. Again, this is something you can figure out according to the kids you are teaching.

Secondly, **Tone of Voice**. This heavily ties into engagement, as the way you speak will often be the biggest determiner of how engaging you are. When you teach there should be several different tones used in your voice. The most important one is confidence. If you aren't speaking with confidence, you may have the appearance that you don't know what you are talking about. This is hugely damaging, as students can't trust you, and may have trouble taking you seriously. Speaking with confidence can be challenging, especially if you are feeling nervous or unsure. It is worthwhile spending time practicing speaking in a confident tone, and the more you are upfront and the centre of attention, the more you will get better at it. Your tone should also be fun and encouraging, but with a firmness that establishes that you are in charge. Try to face the kids as much as possible and try not to talk when you have your back to the kids. Avoid being monotone and dry, as even if the subject is super interesting to the kids, they will become bored if you present the subject in a dull voice.

Eye Contact is also something that you should get comfortable with. If you have eye contact with your class, you will be directing your speech towards them. If, however, you are looking over their heads at the wall, they will feel like you aren't talking to them.

Another critical aspect of teaching is **Posture and Body Language**. Is your body communicating the same thing as your tone of voice? You can talk as if BBK is the most

interesting thing in the world but if you look like you'd rather be somewhere else, kids will notice. The aim is to always have what is called an *Open Posture*. The key features of an open posture are: Arms away from the body, straight back, and head high. What you want to avoid is a *Closed Posture*, where you have your arms crossed, head slouched, back bent, and no eye contact. Consider two teachers. One has an open posture, the other has a closed posture. Which teacher would you approach after a class and ask a question? You wouldn't hesitate to ask the teacher with the open posture, but you might be scared the teacher with closed posture will bite your head off.

Be Passionate about What you are Teaching. This heavily relates to all of the points above. Basically, if you aren't passionate about what you are teaching this will reflect in a lack of engagement between you and the kids, a closed posture, no eye-contact and an uninterested tone of voice which will immediately make kids bored. Even if you aren't passionate about BBK, find something that you like about BBK and present from that angle. You could deliver some incredible content but if you aren't passionate about it, your audience won't learn much from it.

And lastly, **Know your Audience.** Every group you teach will be different, depending on things like age for example. Knowing your audience can help you tailor the material you are teaching to best suit your audience. For example, for a younger audience using visuals and keeping long sentences to a minimum. Keep in mind kids who have difficulties learning and try to deliver the lesson, so everyone understands and learns.

All the above tips for teaching can be applied pretty much everywhere in life, not just Boys Brigade. Everything we've discussed so far applies to you as the teacher. Now let's briefly look at some tips for teaching structure:

Make it into a Game or Competition. Competing against others is a fantastic way to help boys pay attention. Boys are far more likely to pay attention if there are bragging rights on the line, so look for ways to implement some form of competition into what you are teaching. Obviously, it should be noted that this should be healthy competitiveness, and anything less should be stamped out. This is why knowing your audience is so crucial.

Short and Sweet. You will of course have a time limit on how long you teach based on the schedule of your night, but try to limit yourself talking for more than 10 minutes at a time. If you have a lot of content you want to get through, try having a break after 10 or so minutes and getting the boys to do an activity related to what you are teaching.

Make it Memorable. When teaching BBK you don't want the boys to easily forget what they have learnt. This is why doing things like quizzes can be really helpful.

Kahoot. Because quizzes are so useful to help review learning, I have created a Kahoot quiz to do just that. This Kahoot quiz is designed to cover the majority of basic BBK material. You shouldn't start out teaching BBK with the Kahoot, rather, teach the material first and then later on in the term review it with the Kahoot.

What are some other ideas on how to teach BBK effectively?

- The Seniors Handbook. Get the boys to read out the history of Boys Brigade
- Create a timeline based on the information in the Seniors Handbook. This is good opportunity for some healthy competition, getting the boys in groups and giving them large sheets of paper to create a timeline with. The timeline can be judged on historical accuracy, aesthetics and basic timeline standards. The task can be made more challenging by limiting access to the book, or making the boys do it all by memory.
- Interviews. Get Alpha boys to prepare some questions and interview Omega boys. This serves a double purpose: the Alpha boys learn more BBK, and it is a chance for the Omega boys to refresh their memory. It also will teach the valuable life skill of conducting an interview.

Every company is going to differ on how they teach BBK. The key thing to remember is that there is no definite right or wrong way to teach it. However, having an open mind to trying new ideas is something that everyone should have. What you have might work really well, but if you don't know whether something might work better unless you try it.

“A good teacher isn't someone who gives the answers out to their kids but is understanding of needs and challenges and gives tools to help other people succeed.” — Justin Trudeau

Remember, teaching is not about you as the teacher. It is about the students who are learning from you. You don't want to feed them the answers on a spoon; rather, give them the tools to discover the answers for themselves.

To conclude, teaching Boys Brigade Knowledge is a critical part of the Boys Brigade program. Teaching in general can be something that makes a lot of people nervous, and that is perfectly understandable. Get the support you need from older and more experienced officers at your company, and try to enjoy the process, and enjoy seeing yourself improve as a teacher. Boys Brigade Knowledge is a fantastic place to start.

